

CLERK OF SESSION

TRAINING



Clerk of Session Advanced Training - 2021

Presbytery of the Peaks

Introduction

- You should know at this point the basics of how to do your job: taking minutes, using the rolls and registers, and so on.
- This training is to help you get a better grasp on the “Advanced” topics that don’t come up as often, yet you are still expected to be a resource for.

Goals for Our Time

- Additional Book of Order Training
 - Manual of Administrative Operations
 - Child Protection and Sexual Misconduct Policies
 - Responsibilities of Session and Pastor
- Robert's Rules Training
 - Bylaws
 - Parliamentary Procedure
- Leadership Issues

Book of Order

- Administrative Manual: Introduction
 - What is it?
 - A collection of resources and policies specific to your church that ought to make your life easier
 - Why do you need it?
 - Book of Order requires it: G-3.0106:
 - Each council shall develop a manual of administrative operations that will specify the form and guide the work of mission in that council.

Book of Order

- Administrative Manual: Introduction
 - “specify the form”
 - Committee structure and so on. Roles and responsibilities.
 - “guide the work”
 - What to do in case of XYZ.
 - Over 50% of the questions I get are answered by: “What do your bylaws say?” Since nFOG we need to have this information handy, and your Manual is a good spot.
 - Best if it’s a living document that the Session is familiar with and has access to. Good way to train incoming elders.

Book of Order

- Administrative Manual: Items to include
 - Original Charter
 - Articles of Incorporation
 - Deed to Property
 - Bylaws of Church
 - Bylaws of Corporation
 - Mission Statement
 - Position descriptions for all non-ordained staff
 - Electronic Meeting Authorization and Rules

Book of Order

- Administrative Manual: Items to include
 - Description of the Nominating Committee
 - Committee of the Congregation, *not* the session
 - At least 3 members, with at least one active Elder
 - Majority may not be serving on session
 - Pastor has right to serve ex officio without vote
 - How many total? Who nominates? When? What term?
 - Quorum for session
 - Quorum for congregation
 - Quorum for corporation
 - Tax exemption certificate

Book of Order

- Administrative Manual: Items to Include
 - Personnel Procedures
 - Background check, credit check, etc.
 - Description of Performance Review
 - Procedure for counting and depositing collections
 - Procedure for canceling worship for emergencies
 - Procedure for responding to medical emergency or fire in worship
 - All insurance policies

Book of Order

- Administrative Manual: Items to Include
 - New member procedures
 - Descriptions of work of each committee
 - Expectations for those serving on committees
 - Job descriptions for the work of each committee or church organization
 - Instructions for ushers, greeters, communion servers and preparers, etc.
 - Policies and fees for use of building (eg, weddings)

Book of Order

- Administrative Manual: Items to Include
 - Sexual Misconduct policy
 - Child Protection policy
 - Procedure for responding to a lawsuit
 - Session Meeting policy (open, closed, etc)
 - Procedure for responding to requests for minutes from non-session and non-church members
 - Rules related to finance and audits
 - Stewardship and pledging procedures
 - Session Calendar (dates to elect nominating, etc)

Book of Order

- Administrative Manual: Items to Include
 - Session Calendar (this can be just for the clerk and/or moderator instead of in the manual)
 - What month to approve calling congregational meeting for nominating
 - What month to have the annual review of the rolls
 - What month to have the annual review of the pastor's salary
 - What month to elect the Stewardship committee, etc.

Book of Order

- Child and Youth Protection Policy
 - Purpose
 - Protecting children and youth
 - Liability shield
 - Making parents comfortable
 - Common Elements
 - Background checks
 - Should remain confidential
 - Volunteer training
 - Interactions with children

Book of Order

- Child and Youth Protection Policy
 - Common Elements (con't)
 - Two Adult Rule
 - Ratios
 - Bathroom policy
 - Reporting
 - Response Team
 - Social Media

Book of Order

- Sexual Misconduct Policy
 - Purpose
 - Liability shield
 - Guide in difficult times
 - Ensuring fairness to all involved
 - Common Elements
 - Expectations
 - Reporting
 - Definitions
 - Signature of review

Book of Order

- Division of Powers Between Pastors and Elders
 - Sessions are responsible to:
 - Provide that the Word of God be truly preached and heard
 - G-3.0201a
 - Includes providing for preaching, worship, nurture and education
 - Planning and leading outreach efforts
 - Planning and leading social reconciliation
 - Initiating and responding to ecumenical efforts

Book of Order

- Division of Powers Between Pastors and Elders
 - Sessions are responsible to:
 - Provide that the Sacraments be rightly administered
 - G-3.0201b
 - Authorizing the Lord's Supper at least quarterly
 - Authorizing Baptisms as appropriate
 - Exercising pastoral care among the congregation (in order for there to be the unity there the Lord's Supper represents)

Book of Order

- Division of Powers Between Pastors and Elders
 - Sessions are responsible to:
 - Provide for congregational care
 - G-3.0201c
 - Receive and dismiss members (may be done by a commission)
 - Review active roll at least annually
 - Provide for training of new elders and deacons
 - Stewardship training/campaigns
 - Managing the property
 - Directing deacons, trustees and all other committees
 - Employing staff
 - Mission and Justice

Book of Order

- Division of Powers Between Pastors and Elders
 - Sessions are responsible to:
 - G-3.0203
 - Call special session meeting when requested by 2 or more in writing, and reasonable notice given.
 - G-3.0205
 - Authorize offerings and distribute proceeds
 - Offerings must be counted and recorded by at least 2 appointed persons, or 1 fidelity bonded person
 - Keep financial records that are open to church officers
 - At least annual reports of all financial activities

Book of Order

- Division of Powers Between Pastors and Elders
 - Sessions are responsible to:
 - Approve the budget (not the congregation)
 - Call Congregational Meetings (G-1.0502)
 - Review annually the compensation of the ordained staff (G-2.0804)
 - Approve use of building for all outside organizations and marriages
 - Train new members of session

Book of Order

- Division of Powers Between Pastors and Elders
 - Pastors are responsible to:
 - G-3.0203
 - Moderate the session or invite another TE moderator.
 - Call a special meeting of the session.
 - G-2.0501
 - Teach the faith and equip the saints for the work of ministry
 - G-2.0504
 - Engage in pastoral care, prayer, teaching the Word, equipping the congregation, share in leadership, compassion, witness and service, and serve on higher councils of the church

Book of Order

- Division of Powers Between Pastors and Elders
 - Pastors:
 - Can marry who they want to, but not necessarily in the church building
 - Installed pastors and associate pastors are members of session and may vote if they wish to, make motions, etc. (G-3.0201)

Robert's Rules

- Administration Tips
 - Consent Agenda
 - Include all of the non-controversial items that require approval into one motion
 - Eg, approval of minutes, communion dates, changes to roll
 - Commissions
 - Commissions act with the full authority of the session
 - At least two Ruling Elders and a Teaching Elder
 - Good uses include: receiving new members, reviewing the roll, personnel matters, approve special communion request

Robert's Rules

- Bylaws
 - You don't *need* bylaws, but they are a nice place to put all of the Book of Order items that since nFOG need to be provided “by rule”.
 - Bylaws may be *more* restrictive than the Book of Order, but not less
 - If your bylaws and the Book of Order conflict, the Book of Order wins
 - You might have one set of bylaws for your church corporation, and one for the church

Robert's Rules

- Bylaws
 - Common items often included in bylaws:
 - Quorum of session
 - Quorum of congregation for congregational meetings
 - Congregational meeting notification requirements
 - Nominating Committee procedures
 - Annual meeting provisions
 - Structural issues such as unicameral vs bicameral systems, size of each class for session and number of classes, etc.

Robert's Rules

- Common items often included in bylaws:
 - Who approves Congregational Meeting Minutes
 - Election procedures for the Corporation
 - Provision for how to edit bylaws
 - Provision for election of Treasurer and/or Clerk
 - Procedure for filling officer vacancies

Robert's Rules

- Parliamentary Procedure
 - Role of Clerk is sometimes parliamentarian
 - Motions
 - Once made and seconded may not be “withdrawn”
 - Require no second if coming from a committee
 - Are not able to receive “friendly” amendments, just amendments
 - You can amend a motion 2 levels down, but no further
 - Substitute motions

Robert's Rules

- Parliamentary Procedure
 - Call the Previous Question
 - Committee of the whole
 - Executive Session
 - Lay on the Table vs. Postpone (in)definitely
 - Rescinding previous actions
 - Call for vote by ballot

Transitional Leadership Issues

- When the pastor leaves, people will look to the Clerk of Session for leadership quite frequently.
 - “Real” leaders vs positional leaders. Might not always be you.
- When to engage COM
- You **MUST** have a moderator to have a Session Meeting.

Other Leadership Issues

– General Leadership Issues

- Long Range Planning
- Making sure the Pastor is taken care of
 - Personnel committee is Session
 - Annual review of adequacy of pastor's salary
 - Make sure they're not burning out or doing too much
 - Help them and support them
 - Bring sensitive matters to their attention

Legal Issues

– Legal Issues

- “To Do”s to keep your church legally safe
 - Offer annual training on required policies
 - Renew Leases when necessary
 - Require certificates of insurance from 3rd parties
 - Form a corporation and file annual report
 - Acknowledge all contributions in a timely manner

Q&A